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ABSTRACT

This paper explores how life course organization influences overall life quality and achievement, with emphasis on achievement differences between men and women. Life course organization refers to the level, timing, sequencing, and continuity of educational, occupational, marital, childbearing, and other commitments made by an individual over a lifespan. Findings from existing research on the educational/occupational attainment process generally indicate that women obtain fewer years of education than men and receive lower pay for similar jobs, even when the amount of education is controlled. Hypotheses are that variations in educational and work histories directly affect subsequent achievement and that the greater variability in life course patterns among women is related to women's lower achievement in adulthood. The sample (2,010 males and 2,025 females) was based on data from a longitudinal study in which over 400,000 men and women who were in high school in 1960 were questioned at ages 19, 23, and 29 regarding their family backgrounds, cognitive skills, knowledge levels, interests, and plans. Findings indicated clear sex differences in continuity of schooling and work between high school and age 29, negative impact on income from work interruptions (mostly by women), and persistence of sex effects on job prestige and income in spite of controls. The conclusion is that the continuity of schooling and work do have some value for explaining differences in subsequent achievement between men and women. (DB)

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A LIFESPAN PERSPECTIVE ON ADULTS' ACHIEVEMENT AND LIFE QUALITY

In his empirical research on factors contributing to quality of life among men and women of different age groups, Flanagan (1978) found that education (learning) and, especially, work were major factors in determining overall life quality for both men and women. However, distinct sex differences in levels of educational and occupational attainment have been clearly documented. Women have been found to (a) obtain fewer years of education than men, and (b) receive lower pay than men for similar jobs, even when amount of education is controlled (Sewell & Hauser, 1976; Suter & Miller, 1973; Treiman & Terrell, 1975). These differences in achievement have not as yet been adequately explained by existing models of the educational/occupational attainment process. It has been suggested that the organization of events (e.g., the timing, sequencing, and continuity of schooling, work, marriage, and childbearing over the lifespan may contribute to differences in subsequent achievement. The research discussed here represents an attempt to identify and incorporate particular aspects of life course organization in studies of achievement and to determine the extent to which the inclusion of such variables enhances our understanding of achievement processes and, in particular, sex differences in achievement.[1]

Background

Much research has been conducted in recent years on the processes of achievement, as indicated by educational and occupational attainment, and of sex differences in such achievment. Such studies have typically been based on the Wisconsin status attainment paradigm (Blau & Duncan, 1967; Duncan, Featherman & Duncan, 1972; Featherman & Hauser, 1976; Sewell & Hauser, 1976) in which attainment is viewed as having its origins in background socioeconomic status and in the individuals' cognitive abilities. These background factors are related to intervening social psychological factors (e.g., motivation, aspirations, and parents' influence) and to intervening behavioral events (e.g.,

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1. This research was carried out in conjunction with a study of sex differences in the realization of achievement potential (NIMH Grant No. 1-ROI-MH29509-01).

marital status, number of children, and number of years of labor force experience). Together, all these factors are hypothesized to determine educational attainment, which in turn influences occupational status and income achieved in adulthood.

While this model has been effective in delineating the processes of educational and occupational attainment for young adult males, it has been much less effective in explaining observed sex differences in educational and occupational attainment. One possible reason for its failure to explain such sex differences lies in the relative exclusion from the model of life experiences following high school. Sewell and Hauser (1976) note that while the variables included (e.g., background, abilities, social-psychological characteristics) are powerful in explaining educational achievement and early occupational status, these factors "become less important, with the passage of time, for explaining later achievements" (p. 191). They stress the need for data about job experiences and other factors "more pertinent and proximate to current earnings." Featherman and Carter (1976) emphasize the need to consider as well how significant life experiences (e.g., school, work, marriage, childbearing) are organized over the lifespan. In light of the increasing tendencies among both men and women to intersperse education, work, childbearing, and leisure over the lifespan (Best & Stern, 1977), and the increasing tendencies of adult women to return to school and/or work (Hayghe, 1978; Young, 1977), it is important that studies of achievement in adulthood take into consideration the nature of, and variations in individual's life course organization. Examination of the influence of life course organization is likely to be particularly important in studies of sex differences in achievement due to greater variability in life course patterns among women.

Life course organization refers to the level, timing, sequencing, and continuity of educational, occupational, marital, childbearing, and other commitments made by an individual over his/her lifespan. Following human capital theory (Becker, 1964; Mincer, 1974), specific life course organization patterns are hypothesized to exert a negative influence on subsequent educational and occupational achievement to the extent that they represent a reduced time investment in schooling or work. To the extent that women's life patterns differ from men's, life course organization may help to explain the observed sex differences in educational and occupational attainment.

There is some evidence to support the theory that variations in educational and work histories directly affect subsequent achievement. Delays in entering postsecondary programs have been found to cost approximately one year in educational achievement, and delays and interruptions in postsecondary education have each been found to result in a net decrement of over $1000 in annual earnings (Featherman & Carter, 1976). Many studies of impact of continuity of work experience on occupational achievement have also confirmed the negative relationship between work discontinuities and earnings, finding the impact of such discontinuities greater for married than single women (Mincer & Polachek, 1974; Polachek, 1975), and, among private sector employees, greater for women than men (Brown, 1976). However, Kahne (1978) cites recent studies challenging the presumed linkage between work discontinuity and earnings penalties, suggesting that the relationship may vary according to the number of interruptions (Huttner, 1977; Stevens & Herriet, 1975), type of occupation (Jusenius, 1976), and, for women, marital status (Hudis, 1976). Previous research also suggests that variations in marriage and childbearing history affect subsequent educational and occupational achievement through their impact on educational and/or work histories. Marital status has been found to relate to women's educational participation and achievement and to their labor force participation (Treiman & Terrell, 1975. Timing of childbearing has been found to affect both educational participation and attainment and labor force participation for women and--to a lesser extent--for men; these factors all, in turn, impact on occupational achievement (Card, 1977; Sweet, 1970). Finally, number and ages of children have been found to relate to level (full-time vs. part-time) of labor force participation (McClendon, 1976; Treiman & Terrell, 1975).

Objectives

The current research attempts to integrate and build on much of this previous work by exploring the relationships between specific aspects of life course organization--the continuity of educational and work experiences between high school and approximately age 29--and subsequent occupational achievement. The objectives of the study are to document the extent of sex differences in life course organization and to assess the impact of different life course patterns on occupational achievement and satisfaction at age 29 for a representative sample of women and men. It is hypothesized that discon-

tinuities in schooling or work will relate to diminished occupational achievement because of the lower levels of individual investment in the career implied by the discontinuity. It is further hypothesized that sex differences in life course organization patterns will explain part of the observed sex difference in subsequent achievement.

The specific research questions investigated in this study are as follows:

1. What are the nature and extent of sex differences in life course organization?

2. To what extent is achievement at age 29 a function of prior life course organization: what life patterns contribute to higher levels of achievement? What patterns appear to contribute to lower achievement levels?

3. Is the impact of life course organization on achievement different for women and men? For professional vs. non-professional women and men?

Methods

Sample

This study was based on data from Project TALENT, a longitudinal study of over 400,000 men and women who were in high school (grades 9-12) in 1960. These individuals participated in two days of testing when they were in high school, providing information on their family backgrounds, cognitive skills, knowledge levels, interests, plans and aspirations, and high school activities and programs. They have since been followed-up one, five, and eleven years after graduating from high school. These follow-up surveys yielded information on their educational and occupational experiences, marital and family histories, job satisfaction, career attainment, and other aspects of life quality at approximately ages 19, 23, and 29 respectively. Special telephone surveys and a sophisticated system of case weights have been used by the Project TALENT staff to correct for bias resulting from nonresponse to the follow-up surveys. Using these weights in analyses of the data produces results which can be generalized to the population as a whole--in this case, the high school classes 1960-1963 who today are men and women in their early 30s.

The analysis sample was drawn from the pool of participants in the ninth grade cohort (the class of 1963) who had responded to each of the three follow-up surveys. The ninth grade cohort was selected because it is more representative of the population as a whole in that individuals who drop out of high school tend to do so after ninth grade. Cases with "complete" data (i.e., data from all three follow-ups) were used in order to provide a more complete basis for mapping life course trajectories during the period from high school to age 29.

A total of 10,025 men and women in the ninth grade cohort had complete data. Of these, 4,035 (2,010 males and 2,025 females) were selected for inclusion in the analysis sample. This number was considered sufficiently large to allow analyses of subgroups of interest (e.g., professional vs. non-professional workers), while not being so large as to make costs of data processing prohibitive. The analysis sample was stratified by sex, race, and career group. (Career group was determined using the Flanagan career groups, as described in Wise, McLaughlin & Steel, 1977). In addition, the individual case weights developed for the complete data sample were adjusted to compensate for biases in socioeconomic status and general academic aptitude in this group relative to the population as a whole.

Variables

The independent variables of interest in addition to sex were educational interruptions and work interruptions. Since questions regarding the continuity of schooling and work had not been asked of all respondents, it was necessary to determine whether or not each individuals' schooling and work had been interrupted based on their responses to other items in the questionnaire.

Educational interruptions were determined based on comparisons between a person's activity status (e.g., in school, working) at each follow-up and his/her report of the amount of education received. In addition, for those who attended college, data were available regarding whether or not they attended continuously. A person's schooling was considered interrupted if she/he either reported not attending college continuously or if she/he reported not being in school at one time but later reported having obtained further education.

Work interruptions were determined by the activity status reports at each follow-up plus data on the person's years of work experience, amount of unemployment experience, and--for women--whether or not she had worked continuously since leaving school. A person's work was said to have been interrupted if she/he reported a period of paid work--either full- or part-time--followed by a period of not working for pay, whether or not he or she had returned to work.

The dependent variable of interest was occupational attainment. Following the Wisconsin status attainment model, attainment was defined in terms of the prestige and income level of the current occupation. Occupational prestige was determined using the NORC Occupational Prestige scale, with a range from 24 (shoeshiners) to 94 (Supreme Court Justices). Two measures of earnings were initially considered: annual earnings, and hourly earnings--the latter presumed to be a better indication of earnings for part-time workers.

In addition to these objective indicators of occupational attainment, more qualitative measures of career achievement and success were also examined. These included the person's liking for his/her current work, the fit between one's current job and his/her career plans, and one's satisfaction with one's work role in relation to her quality of life. The latter measure was drawn from a scale developed by John Flanagan and his colleagues at the American Institutes for Research designed to assess individuals' life quality in each of fifteen life domains (Flanagan & Russ-Eft, 1975).

Several additional variables were examined to provide a basis for determining for whom and under what conditions educational and work interruptions influence subsequent occupational attainment. These include background socioeconomic status (SES), amount of education, number of licenses or certificates earned.

Results

Sex Differences in Life Course Organization

The data revealed clear sex differences in educational and work continuity between high school and age 29. Table 1 shows the extent to which men and women with varying amounts of education were found to have interrupted their

TABLE 1

PERCENTS OF ALL MEN AND WOMEN WITH EDUCATIONAL AND/OR WORK INTERRUPTIONS THROUGH AGE 29, BY EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Education/ Work Interruptions	Less than High School		High School Graduate		Some Postsecondary Education		College Graduate		Graduate Degree		TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Effective N	24	30	108	128	339	284	167	121	72	30	711	593
Estimate of Population Frequency	24,078	32,598	117,352	139,084	368,355	308,592	182,548	131,478	78,235	32,598	772,568	644,350
INTERRUPTION SUBGROUPS												
Education Interrupted												
Work Interrupted	-	-	5.8	7.3	6.7	19.7	3.6	5.3	6.1	21.0	5.5	13.2
Work Not Interrupted	-	-	11.6	1.3	24.1	4.4	15.5	0.8	19.7	7.4	18.9	2.9
Never Worked	-	-	-	0.6	0.6	0.4	-	[illegible]	-	-	0.3	0.3
Education Not Interrupted												
Work Interrupted	28.7	81.2	17.8	69.4	20.1	57.1	20.4	65.5	7.2	46.2	18.8	62.1
Work Not Interrupted	71.3	8.7	64.8	20.1	48.6	17.7	60.5	27.2	67.0	25.4	56.5	20.1
Never Worked	-	10.1	-	1.3	-	0.7	-	1.1	-	-	-	1.3
TOTALS ACROSS SUBGROUPS												
Education												
Interrupted	-	-	17.4	9.2	31.5	24.5	19.1	6.2	25.6	28.4	24.7	16.4
Not Interrupted	100.0	100.0	82.6	90.8	68.7	75.5	80.9	93.8	74.2	71.6	75.3	83.6
Work												
Interrupted	28.7	81.2	23.5	76.6	26.8	76.8	24.1	70.8	13.3	67.2	24.3	75.3
Not Interrupted	71.3	8.7	76.6	21.4	72.6	27.1	75.9	28.0	86.7	32.8	75.4	23.0
Never Worked	-	10.1	-	1.8	0.6	1.1	-	1.3	-	-	0.3	1.7

schooling and/or their work.[1] As can be seen, men were more inclined than women to interrupt their schooling except in the case of men and women who had entered and completed graduate school. Not surprisingly, women at all educational levels were much more inclined than men to have interrupted their work at some point since completing their schooling. However, the incidence of work interruptions was lowest for both women and men who had obtained graduate degrees.

Table 2 presents comparable data for full-time workers only. As can be seen, similar patterns of incidence of educational- and work-interruptions were found. However, the extent of sex differences in both educational and work interruptions is somewhat less pronounced when only full-time workers are considered.

Impact of Life Course Organization on Achievement

First order relationships between (1) educational and work continuity and (2) various background and outcome variables were assessed (for full-time workers only) using bivariate analytic techniques. The variables examined and the results obtained are summarized in Table 3. As can be seen, both educational and work continuity were significantly related to sex and origin SES. Educational continuity was also found to relate to several measures of occupational attainment (income, liking of current job, satisfaction with overall work role in life) but not to educational attainment. It is of interest to note that those who had interrupted their education had higher incomes than those who had not. Continuity of work was significantly related to all the educational and occupational outcome measures examined except number of licenses or certificates obtained.

SES and amount of education are known to be salient determinant of occupational attainment. To determine the extent to which educational and work continuity influence women's and men's occupational achievement net of these factors, multiple classification analyses were carried out for three of the outcome variables: job prestige, income, and satisfaction with one's work role. Analyses were carried out separately for workers in professional and non-

1. All analyses were performed based on the effective N--the effective sample size after adjustments for differential case weightings. For a more detailed discussion of the effective sample size of statistics derived from weighted cases, see Chapter 4 in the Project TALENT Data Bank Handbook (Wise, McLaughlin, & Steel, 1977).

TABLE 2

PERCENTS OF FULL TIME WORKERS ONLY WITH EDUCATIONAL AND/OR WORK INTERRUPTIONS THROUGH AGE 29, BY EDUCATIONAL STATUS

Education/ Work Interruptions	Less than High School		High School Graduate		Some Postsecondary Education		College Graduate		Graduate Degree		TOTAL	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Effective N	21	8	106	51	323	125	150	62	65	16	665	263
Estimate of Population Frequency	22,818	8,693	115,179	55,416	350,969	135,824	162,989	67,369	70,629	17,385	722,584	285,774
INTERRUPTION SUBGROUPS												
Education Interrupted												
Work Interrupted	--	--	5.9	11.9	6.6	19.5	3.0	8.5	2.1	16.1	5.0	14.6
Work Not Interrupted	--	--	11.8	3.4	25.2	9.6	17.1	1.4	19.3	12.8	19.8	6.3
Education Not Interrupted												
Work Interrupted	23.0	68.5	16.3	35.7	17.4	36.4	14.8	47.2	4.4	25.2	15.5	39.2
Work Not Interrupted	77.0	31.5	66.0	49.0	50.9	34.5	65.0	42.9	74.2	45.9	59.6	39.9
TOTALS ACROSS SUBGROUPS												
Education												
Interrupted	--	--	17.7	15.3	31.8	29.1	20.1	9.8	21.4	28.9	24.9	20.9
Not interrupted	100.0	100.0	82.3	84.7	68.2	70.9	79.9	90.2	78.6	71.1	75.1	79.1
Work												
Interrupted	23.0	68.5	22.2	47.6	24.0	55.9	17.9	55.7	6.5	41.3	20.6	53.8
Not interrupted	77.0	31.5	77.8	52.4	76.0	44.1	82.1	44.3	93.5	58.7	79.4	46.2

Table 3

First-Order Relationships Between Background, Experience and Outcome Variables and Continuity of Educational and Work Experience

Background and Outcome Variables	Continuity of Education			Continuity of Work		
	Relationship with Educ. Continuity	Interpretation of Relationship		Relationship with Work Continuity	Interpretation of Relationship	
		Interrupted	Not Interrupted		Interrupted	Not Interrupted
Background						
Sex	χ^2 ***	male	female	χ^2 ***	female	male
Parents' SES	t ***	lower SES	higher SES	t ***	lower SES	higher SES
Experience						
Attend college full/part-time	χ^2 NS	---	---	χ^2 NS	---	---
Years work experience	t **	more work experience	less work experience	t ***	less work experience	more work experience
Current job status	χ^2 ***	working full-time	working part-time; not working	χ^2 ***	working part-time; not working	working full-time
Hours worked/week	t NS	---	---	t ***	fewer hours (<37)	more hours (>43)
Tenure on current job	t NS	---	---	t ***	fewer years (<3)	more years (>4)
Outcome						
Amount of Education	t NS	---	---	t ***	less education	more education
Number licences/certificates	χ^2 NS	---	---	χ^2 NS	---	---
Job prestige	t NS	---	---	t ***	lower prestige	higher prestige
Annual income	t **	higher income (>8000)	lower income (<7000)	t ***	lower income (<5500)	higher income (>10,000)
Hourly income	t NS	---	---	t ***	lower hourly rate	higher hourly rate
Liking of current job	t ***	less enjoyment	more enjoyment	t *	less enjoyment	more enjoyment
Fit with career plan	t NS	---	---	t ***	less closely fit	more closely fit
Satisfaction with work role	t **	less satisfied	more satisfied	t **	less satisfied	more satisfied

* $p \leq .05$
** $p \leq .01$
*** $p \leq .001$

professional careers. While few statistically significant relationships were found, several of the results are worth noting.

Effects on job prestige. The effects of sex, educational interruptions, and work interruptions on job prestige are summarized in Table 4. The sex effect on job prestige was quite pronounced among professional workers ($P \leq .01$), though not among non-professionals. In the former group, men enjoyed a distinct advantage over women, which was only partly accounted for by the other factors (educational and work-interruptions) when the covariates (SES and amount of education) were controlled.

Somewhat surprisingly, given the lack of a significant direct relationship in Table 3, educational interruptions also appeared to significantly affect job prestige for non-professional workers ($P \leq .05$). The influence on job prestige for professional workers was not significant, however. Work interruptions appeared to have little impact on job prestige for both professional and non-professional workers.

Effects on income. The extent to which sex, educational continuity, and work continuity influence income at age 29, when SES and amount of education are controlled, is shown in Table 5. clearly, sex was the strongest determinant of income among both professional and non-professional workers, although statistically significant results were found only among non-professional workers ($P \leq .001$). Even after controlling for educational and work continuity, as well as SES and level of education, women in professional careers earned $2000 per year less than their male counterparts, and women in non-professional careers earned over $3000/year less.

Work interruptions also resulted in income differences of appreciable magnitude, although, again, the effect of work interruptions was statistically significant only for non-professional workers ($P \leq .01$). Among professional workers, work interruptions resulted in a net loss of over $1200/year; among non-professional workers the loss was greater--nearly $1500/year. Educational interruptions appeared to have a negligible effect on subsequent income, although those with interruptions continued to have a slight advantage.

Effects on Satisfaction with One's Work Role. Of the various factors shown in Table 6, only work interruptions appeared to have any impact on

Table 4

RESULTS OF MULTIPLE CLASSIFICATION ANALYSIS OF JOB PRESTIGE WITH SES AND AMOUNT OF EDUCATION CONTROLLED

Factors of Interest	Eff. N	Deviations from Mean Job Prestige[a]		Relationship between Factor and Job Prestige	
		Unadjusted Deviation	Deviation Adjusted for Independents & Covariates	Eta[b]	Beta[c]
Full-time Workers, Professional Careers (Mean Job Prestige = 77.92; SD = 7.72)					
Sex				.34	.22 **
Male	144	1.72	1.10		
Female	62	-3.99	-2.55		
Education				.05	.06
Interrupted	36	-0.75	-0.99		
Not Interrupted	169	0.16	0.21		
Work				.11	.01
Interrupted	43	-1.70	0.22		
Not Interrupted	163	0.45	-0.06		
Full-time Workers, Non-Professional Careers (Mean Job Prestige = 64.42; SD = 11.01)					
Sex				.03	.03
Male	489	0.22	0.18		
Female	181	-0.59	-0.49		
Education				.06	.08 *
Interrupted	170	-1.23	-1.47		
Not Interrupted	500	0.42	0.50		
Work				.08	.06
Interrupted	212	-1.36	-0.91		
Not Interrupted	458	0.63	0.42		

[a] Job Prestige scores could range from 24 (shoeshiners) to 94 (Supreme Court Justice)

[b] Eta = r

[c] Beta = r with factors and covariates partialled out

* $P \leq .05$
** $P \leq .01$
*** $P \leq .001$

Table 5

RESULTS OF MULTIPLE CLASSIFICATION ANALYSIS OF INCOME
WITH SES AND AMOUNT OF EDUCATION CONTROLLED

Factors of Interest	Eff. N	Deviations from Mean Income		Relationships between Factors and Income	
		Unadjusted Deviation	Deviation Adjusted for Independents & Covariates	Eta[a]	Beta[b]
Full-time Workers, Professional Careers (Mean Income = $11,372; SD = $6756)					
Sex				.21	.14
Male	144	$ 910	$ 634		
Female	62	-$2108	-$1468		
Education				.02	.01
Interrupted	36	$ 280	$ 162		
Not Interrupted	169	-$ 60	-$ 35		
Work				.13	.07
Interrupted	43	-$1765	-$ 971		
Not Interrupted	163	$ 466	$ 257		
Full-time Workers, Non-Professional Careers (Mean Income = $9526; SD = $5793)					
Sex				.28	.24 ***
Male	489	$ 968	$ 833		
Female	181	-$2618	-$2251		
Education				.04	.04
Interrupted	170	$ 371	$ 397		
Not Interrupted	500	$ 126	-$ 135		
Work				.20	.12 **
Interrupted	212	-$1707	-$1009		
Not Interrupted	458	$ 792	$ 468		

[a] Eta = r

[b] Beta = r with factors and covariates partialled out

* P ≤ .05
** P ≤ .01
*** P ≤ .001

satisfaction with one's work role in relation to one's overall quality of life. Among both professional and non-professional workers, interruptions in one's work were related to distinctly lower satisfaction ratings even after the other factors and covariates were controlled, though statistical significance was achieved only among non-professional workers ($P \leq .01$). It is not possible, from these data, however, to determine whether the interruptions contribute to lower satisfaction, or whether those who are less satisfied are more inclined to interupt their work.

Discussion

Although clear sex differences in continuity of schooling and work between high school and age 29 were identified, these differences, for the most part, did not appear to be significantly related to subsequent job prestige, annual income, or satisfaction with one's work role in life. Most of the significant relationships between educational and work continuity, on the one hand, and these outcome measures on the other, disappeared when sex, SES, and amount of education were controlled. Educational continuity in particular appeared to have little impact on these outcome measures. This may be due to the fact that amount of education, rather than continuity, is the more critical factor, and that controlling for differences in this variable obviated the initial direct relationships between educational interruptions and income and satisfaction with one's work role.

Work interruptions had a somewhat larger negative impact, particularly on income. Although not always statistically significant, these relationships are consistent with the hypothesis that the lower investment in one's career reflected by work interruptions will result in lower subsequent levels of achievement. It is possible that the results obtained here underestimate the true extent of the impact of work interruptions on subsequent achievement, in that only data for full-time workers were examined. It is likely that many of those who had interrupted their work (mostly women) were not working full time as of age 29. Thus, it would not be possible at this point to assess the extent of the impact of such interruptions on their achievement or life quality.

Sex effects on job prestige for professional workers, and on income for non-professional and, to a lesser extent, professional workers, persisted in spite of controls for variations in these life course patterns and the background factors. This suggests that in those instances, at least, much of the observed

Table 6

RESULTS OF MULTIPLE CLASSIFICATION ANALYSIS OF SATISFACTION WITH WORK ROLE WITH SES AND AMOUNT OF EDUCATION CONTROLLED

Factors of Interest	Eff. N	Deviations from Mean Work Role Satisfaction[a]		Relationship between Factor and Work Role Satisfaction	
		Unadjusted Deviation	Deviation Adjusted for Independents & covariates	Eta[b]	Beta[c]
Full-time Workers, Professional Careers (Mean Work Role Satisfaction = 3.91; SD = .97)					
Sex				.02	.01
Male	139	0.01	-0.01		
Female	60	-0.02	0.01		
Education				.01	.01
Interrupted	35	-0.03	-0.03		
Not Interrupted	164	0.01	0.01		
Work				.12	.13
Interrupted	41	-0.22	-0.24		
Not Interrupted	156	0.06	0.06		
Full-time Workers, Non-Professional Careers (Mean Work Role Satisfaction = 3.79; SD = 1.02)					
Sex				.04	.00
Male	458	0.03	0.00		
Female	168	-0.07	-0.00		
Education				.07	.05
Interrupted	160	-0.11	-0.09		
Not Interrupted	465	0.04	0.03		
Work				.12	.11**
Interrupted	203	-0.17	-0.16		
Not Interrupted	422	0.08	0.08		

[a] Work Role Satisfaction scored 1 = low, 5 = high

[b] Eta = r

[c] Beta = r with factors and covariates partialled out

* $P \leq .05$
** $P \leq .01$
*** $P \leq .001$

sex differences in achievement as of age 29 are not explainable by variations in work continuity. However, as mentioned above, it could be that the impact of differences in life course patterns is only beginning to be observed by age 29, and that as more women reenter the labor force or resume full-time employment, more significant negative impacts will be found.

All of the significant relationships observed between educational or work continuity and the various outcome measures were applicable only to workers in non-professional careers. This may be due in part to the fact that the effective sample size was considerably higher for non-professional workers, despite the oversampling of men and women in professional careers. Thus, estimates of effects will be more powerful for non-professional workers than for professional workers. It is also possible that non-professional careers tend to be more structured, such that progress and advancement are dependent upon building skills and acquiring seniority. Work interruptions would clearly interfere with this process and thus be likely to result in lower achievement. In addition, workers in professional careers will generally have had more education, and thus have fewer years experience in the work force, during which interruptions could occur and make their impact felt.

Conclusions and Implications for Further Research

The results presented here suggest that the particular aspects of life course organization that were examined--continuity of schooling and work--do have some value for explaining differences in subsequent achievement. Based on data on achievement at age 29, these variables appear to be more useful in explaining achievement in non-professional careers than in professional careers, although this conclusion may be a result of the characteristics of the sample and the relatively restricted portion of the lifespan examined. Clearly further research is needed to delineate the mechanisms by which educational or work continuity influence subsequent achievement. Future research efforts should direct themselves to two objectives. First, the impact of life course patterns should be examined over a larger portion of the lifespan, so that sufficient time will have elapsed for the impact of educational and work interruptions to be felt. Second, attention should be given to developing more sophisticated means of assessing life course patterns, so that such factors as the timing, duration, and nature of interruptions in schooling and, in particular, work, can be examined.

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